Course Description and Overview
Thesis Development & Attainment is designed to guide the student toward refinement of his or her thesis for the USC School of Dramatic Arts Master of Fine Arts in Dramatic Writing program. The final thesis project is a play. Over the course of a student’s three years in the program, he or she will select the play that he or she wishes to foreground in his or her transition to the profession post-graduation. The course is an independent study course in which the student prepares his or her thesis play for thesis submission via development that grows increasingly autonomous to full autonomy in the third year. The student is expected to utilize the dramaturgy that he or she gains over the course of his or her master’s curriculum to bring his or her thesis play to a level of mastery. The course allows the student to devote specific hours to development, nurturing, and maintenance of his or her thesis; fully making use of the dramatic writing knowledge received in THTR 566, 500, and other dramatic writing courses. THTR 596b occurs each spring and is preceded by THTR 596a, which occurs each fall.

Learning Objectives
The course includes students from Year Three of the USC MFADW program. Students will focus on organic enhancement of their thesis plays. This will include utilizing dramaturgical skills in practice via peer dramaturgy, mentor dramaturgy, and skills learned in dramaturgy vis-à-vis Greenhouse.

These developmental tasks are designed to cultivate the students’ advancement of their thesis plays. The thesis play must reflect a high level of mastery and professional promise. This means not only that the quality of the work must have attained master’s level; but also that the work includes correct grammar, punctuation, diction, and spelling. (Some students have elected to have their plays reviewed by a professional copy editor before submitting it.) The thesis play will be submitted in single-sided hard copy in professional format and professionally bound to the MFA in Dramatic Writing director and faculty in spring 2016 on the University’s thesis submission date.

Course Notes
Any emails regarding this course must include this text in the subject header or may be unread: “THTR 596b Spring 2016.”

Prerequisite(s): Enrollment in the USC School of Dramatic Arts Master of Fine Arts in Dramatic Writing program. THTR 596a with passing grade
Co-Requisite: None
Concurrent Enrollment: None
Recommended Preparation: Reading/seeing plays

Required Readings
*The Writers’ Journey* by Christopher Vogler

Supplementary:
Poetics by Aristotle
*The Art of Active Dramaturgy: Transforming Critical Thought into Dramatic Action*, Lenora Inez Brown
*The Penguin Book of International Women’s Stories*, Ed. Kate Figes
*The Vintage Book of Latin American Stories*, Ed. Carlos Fuentes
*Breaking Ice: An Anthology of Contemporary African-American Fiction*, Ed. Terry McMillan
*The Oxford Anthology of Modern Indian Poetry*, Eds. Vinay Dharwadker and AK Ramanujan
*The Ways of White Folks: Stories*, Langston Hughes
*The Oxford Book of Short Poems*, Eds. P. J. Kavanagh and James Michie
Description of Grading Criteria and Assessment of Assignments

Academic integrity is important to the University. The student is urged to remember that professors do not “give” grades; students earn grades. Thus, a final grade is entirely up to the student with regards to the effort he or she chooses to expend to meet course requirements. Please note that late work is given a ten percent (10%) penalty and is accepted only within one week of its due date. The only exception is illness or personal crisis. Here are USC’s definitions of grades: “A” for work of excellent quality, “B” for work of good quality, “C” for work of fair quality for undergraduate credit and minimum passing for graduate credit, “C-” as a failing grade for graduate credit, “D-” for work of minimum passing quality for undergraduate credit, “F” for failure, “IN” for incomplete work, student-initiated after 12th week and only awarded under exceptional circumstances.

The thesis play shall be graded according to the following rubric:

25% Quality of character development.
25% Quality of story development.
25% Quality of dialogue crafting.
25% Originality, overall creative achievement, and professionalism of project.

This will compose 70% of the evaluation of grade. The remaining 30% will be an assessment of the professional development of the student based on observations and analysis of student investment in dramatic writing courses, New Works Festivals, program review and assessments, and thesis preparation.

Grading Breakdown:
30% - Professional Development
20% - Report/Analysis: The Writers’ Journey
50% - Final Project & Exam

Overall grading is determined on the following scale:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>96-100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>91-95%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>88-90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>81-84%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>75-77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C-</td>
<td>71-74%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>67-70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D-</td>
<td>64-66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>0-60%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A student must receive a grade of A through C in order to receive a “CR” for the course. In the final semester of the courses, which will be in the student’s third year, spring semester, the student must receive a grade of “CR.” Note that if a grade of INC is issued, you will need to meet with your faculty sponsor and the full-time dramatic writing faculty for an assessment, after which you must refine the thesis until it has reached master’s quality; at that time, a grade change will be implemented if so earned. If a grade of NC is earned, you will have to re-enroll in 596b and continue to refine the portfolio until it has reached master’s quality (re-enrollment is not supported by tuition remission or any other kind of financial support from the School of Dramatic Arts).

Course Schedule: A Weekly Breakdown

This is an independent course, which means that you are expected to make timely progress on the advancement of your thesis play independently, with instructor conferences. Here is a schedule to keep you on track:

**WEEK 1** – Project plan for thesis. Submit to instructor. This can be submitted via email, with appropriate subject header.
**WEEK 2** – Development Phase #1 of thesis.
**WEEK 3** – Development Phase #1 of thesis.
WEEK 4 – Development Phase #1 of thesis. Complete refined 50% of play and submit in hard copy to instructor.
WEEK 5 – Conferences.
WEEK 6 – Conferences.
WEEK 7 – Development Phase #2 of thesis.
WEEK 8 – Development Phase #2 of thesis.
WEEK 9 – Development Phase #2 of thesis. Complete refined second 50% of play and submit in hard copy to instructor. Read “The Writers’ Journey” and prepare a 5-page essay on how his suggestions can help you improve your writing, particularly with regard to character and story development. Submit to instructor via email with appropriate header.
WEEK 10 – Conferences.
WEEK 11 – Conferences.
WEEK 12 – Conferences.
WEEK 13 – Table readings of plays, student will curate readings (obtain actors, rehearse as desired, be timely, preparedness, quality of work). (Ashley Wellman)
WEEK 14 – Table readings of plays, student will curate readings (obtain actors, rehearse as desired, be timely, preparedness, quality of work). (Chloe Huang)
WEEK 15 – Table readings of plays, student will curate readings (obtain actors, rehearse as desired, be timely, preparedness, quality of work). (Fei Kayser)

FINAL PROJECT DUE DATE/FINAL EXAM – 5/6, 4:30 pm (submit a refined version of your thesis play, refined beyond your April University submission and beyond your weeks 13-15 table readings).

*Final Examination Date:
Please note that there is no final exam for this class, but that your thesis is due on the thesis date designated by the University. For Spring 2015, that date was April 3, 2015. The Spring 2016 thesis submission date will be published on the USC Schedule of Classes under the registration calendar. It is due again, in a refined state, at the end of the term for this course. Please be mindful of these two submission dates.

FINAL EXAM
Final Examination Date:
Please note that the Final Exam is mandatory on a day and time set by the University (5/6/2016, 11 am- 1 pm). Please make a note of this in your calendar now. If you miss the final exam, 25% of your grade will be a 0.

Statements on Academic Conduct and Support Systems
Academic Conduct
Plagiarism – presenting someone else’s ideas as your own, either verbatim or recast in your own words – is a serious academic offense with serious consequences. Please familiarize yourself with the discussion of plagiarism in SCampus in Section 11, Behavior Violating University Standards https://scampus.usc.edu/1100-beavior-violating-university-standards-and-appropriate-sanctions/. Other forms of academic dishonesty are equally unacceptable. See additional information in SCampus and university policies on scientific misconduct, http://policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct/.

Discrimination, sexual assault, and harassment are not tolerated by the university. You are encouraged to report any incidents to the Office of Equity and Diversity http://equity.usc.edu/ or to the Department of Public Safety http://capsnet.usc.edu/department/department-public-safety/online-forms/contact-us. This is important for the safety whole USC community. Another member of the university community – such as a friend, classmate, advisor, or faculty member – can help initiate the report, or can initiate the report on behalf of another person. The Center for Women and Men http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/cwm/ provides 24/7 confidential support, and the sexual assault resource center webpage sarc@usc.edu describes reporting options and other resources.

Support Systems
A number of USC’s schools provide support for students who need help with scholarly writing. Check with your advisor or program staff to find out more. Students whose primary language is not English should check with the American Language Institute http://dornsife.usc.edu/all, which sponsors courses and workshops specifically for international graduate students. The Office of Disability Services and Programs http://sait.usc.edu/academicsupport/centerprograms/dsp/home_index.html provides certification for students with disabilities and helps arrange the relevant accommodations. If an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible, USC Emergency Information http://emergency.usc.edu/will provide safety and other updates, including ways in which instruction will be continued by means of blackboard, teleconferencing, and other technology.